

Potluck Success

Potluck dinners can be fun or they can be hazardous to your health. At a potluck, food is often prepared hours before the event, not stored at the proper temperature and handled by many people . . . people who spread germs through their hands, hair, coughing or sneezing.

The result? Possible food poisoning.



Prevent foodborne illness by following these rules:

Keep hot food *HOT!* • Keep cold food *COLD!* • Keep food *CLEAN!*

- ✓ **Cook foods thoroughly.**
- ✓ **Avoid serving low-acid foods, such as creamed dishes, meatballs, beef stew, fish dishes, chicken a la king or cream-filled pies/pastries.**
- ✓ **Reduce time between preparing, cooking and serving foods. Prepare food the same day as the potluck, if possible, only a few hours before serving. If foods have eggs, dairy products, meat or poultry, they should be served within three hours of preparation.**
- ✓ **Refrigerate food in small quantities using shallow pans if you *must* store food overnight.**
- ✓ **Keep hot food *HOT* (above 140° F) and cold food *COLD* (below 41° F) before and during serving. Use a barbecue, Coleman stove or sterno to keep food *HOT*. Use cold packs or ice to keep food *COLD*.**
- ✓ **Use disposable forks, knives, spoons, glasses and plates. Throw disposables away - do not try to wash them! Try to set up the forks, knives and spoons so the guests can pick them up by the handle.**
- ✓ **Line garbage containers with plastic bags to make throwing out the trash easier.**
- ✓ **Keep menu simple; avoid fancy food combinations.**
- ✓ **Do not use any home-canned foods. Home-frozen foods are acceptable.**
- ✓ **Sugar or sweeteners should be served in closed containers or single packets. Use only squeeze or pump bottles for ketchup or mustard, and individual packets for relish, mayonnaise, etc.**
- ✓ **When possible, use chilled ingredients to prepare foods that will be served cold.**
- ✓ **Cover food to prevent contamination by insects, flies, dust or humans.**
- ✓ **Foods safe to prepare at home include fruit pies, bread products, plain cakes, fruit salads, and tossed vegetable salads, including cole slaw with lemon juice/vinegar based dressing. Punches, fruit juices and similar beverages are safe if kept in glass or plastic containers. *Do not* use aluminum containers, which could release metals into foods.**
- ✓ **Throw leftovers away. The food has been handled by many people and is probably contaminated.**

For more information call:

**San Bernardino County Department of Public Health
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
FOOD PROGRAM**

San Bernardino (909) 387-4608 Fontana (909) 356-6444 Ontario (909) 458-9672 Victorville (760) 243-3773